

News & Views: EcoSite Corner

The leading sources of LCA information are cooperating to bring even more and better value to their users. This issue starts a regular update of EcoSite in Int.J.LCA, and a preview and profile of Int.J.LCA can be seen on EcoSite. Catch us at: <http://www.ecosite.co.uk> or send us a fax at: +44-171-281-09666

EcoSite News

Data busting out all over...

Three significant datasets have been made available recently through EcoSite: BUWAL 250, FEFCO, and EAA.

User profile released ...

In Nov./Dec. 1996, EcoSite recorded 35-45 visits (hits) per working day, and 10-15 per day at weekends. Visits of 10-20 minutes are most common. Over half the visitors are industrial employees and government regulators.

European Ecolable Forum launched...

At the behest of DG XI, EcoSite is hosting an online forum for the working group developing ecolable criteria for personal computers.

Viewpoint

In defense of LCA...

Too complicated. Too narrow. Impractical. Incomprehensible to laypeople. Biased. Unscientific.

These are just some of the criticisms levelled at LCA.

A chorus of industrialists, greens, regulators and academics recently have all but lined up to heap scorn upon this young discipline. And perhaps a bit of it is deserved. LCA probably was oversold (or maybe overbought) in the early 1990s.

But before joining the mob, let us consider this. Surely informed decisions are better than ignorant ones. Quantitative methods can, and do, inform decisions in many fields. None of these methods are uniform or perfect, especially in valuation (just ask an accountant).

Of course LCA is criticised. As would be any method used to resolve questions of great public and private interest (just ask an economist). A more important question is: How do practitioners respond to the criticisms? By retreat into sophistry, silence or hypocrisy, or by honest, open debate?

Long live the debate.... and long live LCA!

Now Available

Just some of the items available through EcoSite:

- LCA databases
- Report on LCA Standards
- LCA Software Buyer's Guide (1997 edition)
- Demos of LCA software
- News

News & Views: Software Corner

Eco-it 1.0: A Tool for Environmentally Focused Product Development

PRé Consultants introduces ECO-it, a development in software to aid in the design of environmentally responsible products and packaging. ECO-it is based on the Eco-indicator 95 methodology, which was developed in cooperation with Philips, NedCar, Océ and Schuurink as part of a Dutch government project. This method allows for the expression of the product's environmental impact in one figure.

Although the Eco-indicator methodology needs to be treated experimentally, already a variety of industries and companies are using

it. Originally, Eco-indicators were only available on paper and required time-consuming calculation to be done by the developer. ECO-it revolutionises this by removing the need for any of the manual calculation. Furthermore, ECO-it is a simple and user friendly Windows program with a database of over 100 Eco-indicator values.

ECO-it enables the developer to carry out an environmental analysis of a product design or concept in minutes. The developer needs only to enter the product's characteristics at:

1. the production phase - which materials and production processes are used;
2. the consumer use phase - the amount of energy and extra materials needed in the use of the product; and
3. the disposal phase - what is done with the product after it is no longer useful.

ECO-it has been developed so that even the most complex of products can be analysed in a short time. Moreover, ECO-it can be mastered very quickly and does not require any experience or prior knowledge.

The introductory price of ECO-it is Dfl. 360,- (approx. US\$ 200, ECU 172) excluding VAT. The ECO-it demo can also be downloaded from our website at www.pre.nl

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